



Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz, Secretary
Allan Fisher, Deputy Secretary

March 8, 2023

BILL NUMBER: Senate Joint Resolution 2 – First Reader

SHORT TITLE: Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission – Atlantic Menhaden – Prohibition on Commercial Reduction Fishing

DEPARTMENT’S POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT’S POSITION:

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources provides the following information on Senate Joint Resolution 2.

Purse seining is already prohibited in Maryland waters. The practice is currently allowed in Virginia waters. Management of Atlantic menhaden in Virginia was transitioned from its legislature to the Virginia Marine Resource Commission in 2020, so Virginia is still in the process of engaging a broad array of stakeholders in its scientific management of these fish. Pursuing a Chesapeake Bay-specific population study of Atlantic menhaden at the ASMFC level may result in Maryland shouldering some of the responsibility of obtaining the necessary data. Menhaden are managed according to a coast-wide quota which is divided among the states from Maine to Florida. Conservative ecosystem reference points were just adopted for this fishery in the summer of 2020. The menhaden fishery is currently considered sustainable and is certified as such by the Marine Stewardship Council.

There is little precedent for the Commission to direct a state on how to manage its quota (e.g. dictating particular gears, seasons, operating practices). Initiating an action requiring specific management measures in another state through ASMFC may ultimately result in other states pursuing specific management measures in Maryland that are counter to our state’s management goals and objectives.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The bill was also introduced as SJ 6 in 2022.

BILL EXPLANATION:

This bill is a resolution to urge the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) to evaluate the population of Atlantic menhaden in the Chesapeake Bay and end the practice of purse seining for Atlantic menhaden in the Chesapeake Bay. Purse seining is already prohibited in Maryland waters.

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